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ABSTRACT

This paper describes an approach for preparing teacher education students to teach culturally different students in a creative and effective mode. The approach consists of four components: knowledge, values, practicum, and seminar. The knowledge component recommends that teacher education students learn about cultural styles, specific learning characteristics, and effective teaching behaviors for working with minority group children. Students can gain this knowledge via films and other visual devices, readings, and small-group discussions. The values component recommends that students learn about the values of people from different backgrounds by means of group discussions and analysis of case studies. The practicum component suggests that teacher education students learn from actual contact which can take place in various settings, including public school classrooms, private institutions, and tutoring programs. The seminar component recommends discussion of experiences and problems confronted in the practicum setting and the exchange of ideas for teaching the culturally different. In conclusion, this design combines the theoretical and the practical in an effective approach for developing creative activities for educating pre- and in-service teachers to work with culturally different children. A brief bibliography is included. (PD)

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AN APPROACH TO EDUCATING TEACHERS TO WORK WITH THE CULTURALLY DIFFERENT

Kevin J. Swick
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A major challenge to teacher education institutions has been that of developing visible ways to prepare teacher education students to use creative and effective modes of teaching culturally different students. The low achievement, high dropout rate, and verbal disenchantment expressed by culturally different students has prompted many schools, universities, and related community service groups to examine what it is that turns kids off to school, and, in turn, what can be done to turn them on to school. Moore[1] conducted an anthropological study early in 1962, isolating the teacher variable as the key factor in either helping children succeed or fail in school.

Clark,[2] studying the same phenomena in New York City in 1965, also concluded that the teacher played a major role in either motivating kids to find the classroom a meaningful place to be or turning them off by what they did in the classroom. The analytic work of Moore and Clark, as well as that of many other scholars, prompted teacher education institutions to begin developing new techniques and innovative approaches in their training programs in order to prepare pre-service and in-service teachers to work with culturally different students.

There are a variety of "model programs" that have been proposed as the way to educate teachers for relating to culturally different children. This paper will not add to that list. Rather, the authors would like to draw upon their own experiences, both as teachers of culturally different children and as teachers of teachers, and describe the components of a possible approach to educating teachers to relate creatively, affectively, and effectively to culturally different children in classroom settings.

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In this proposed approach to the preparation of teachers of the culturally different child there are four components: (1) the knowledge component, (2) the values component, (3) a practicum component, and (4) a seminar component. Each of these components are interrelated and depend very much on the sequence of experiences the teacher or teacher education student has previously been exposed to, yet each component does contain some basic content-contact ideas which need to be internalized by the teacher if they are to be maximally effective in relating to culturally different students.

Knowledge Component. Three specific elements of the knowledge component would be: (1) student knowledge about the cultural styles of various minority groups in the society, (2) student knowledge about the specific learning characteristics of minority groups, and (3) student knowledge about effective teacher behaviors for working with disadvantaged and minority group children.

There are a variety of ways to expose teacher education students to these knowledges via independent study readings, individualized unit modules, use of media presentations, and through contact with people knowledgeable in the field. The authors have found particularly effective the use of readings which describe the life styles of culturally different groups, films, and other visual devices which show the problems such groups often face in their social and educational lives. The knowledge component is important because teacher behaviors, as they relate to learning characteristics of culturally different children, are based on information about the cultural context in which the child lives.

With the information base established, the next procedural steps would be to examine some of the learning characteristics especially prevalent in various minority group children. Such information is essential to the formation of sound teacher behaviors. Ways to accomplish this task are: (1) utilize

small group discussion sessions where the focus is on designated learning characteristics of the culturally different, (2) use of films which examine learning characteristics of the culturally different.

Finally, the teacher education student should have information on effective teacher behaviors for relating to culturally different children. Again, a variety of ways to accomplish this task are available. For example, pre-observation readings on such behaviors may then be followed by observation and practice on those behaviors. Knowing about the life style, learning characteristics, and effective teacher behaviors for relating to culturally different children can help to form a base for the development of a more capable teacher.

Values Component. Another major area of concern is the value development process teachers of culturally different children internalize. It is important for pre- and in-service teachers to examine their own value systems as they relate to the value systems of culturally different children. This necessitates knowing something about the value orientations of diverse groups of children, and it means learning to relate the teacher's own values to those of culturally different children.

The authors have found two techniques to be particularly helpful in assisting teacher education students to internalize value development, clarification, and acceptance. First, to aid students in their own value development and clarification, as well as to assist them in understanding and accepting people who hold values divergent from their own, students explore, explain, and clarify their own values in small group sessions within the college classroom. In any classroom group of college students there is represented a wide variety of experiential backgrounds, cultural heritages, and, hence, a wide range of

values. Open, honest discussion, with a sharing of ideas and ideals, can set the stage for understanding and acceptance. Here, in the college classroom setting, teacher education students find opportunity to meet the challenge to understand and accept values different from their own, perhaps to incorporate into their own value systems some of the new values they meet. The college instructor has the opportunity and the responsibility to model the teacher's role in a value development and clarification session. Thus the teacher education student is involved in a two-fold teaching situation - he may interact as he may one day lead his students to do, and he may observe his college instructor utilizing instructional techniques which he may one day utilize in his own classroom. This teaching strategy allows the teacher to teach by doing and the student to learn by doing, thus the college classroom becomes a model of theory in action.

Secondly, the authors have found the process of students doing case studies on culturally different children to be an effective way to involve college students in examining their own value systems as they relate to the value systems of these children. The case study leads to discussion and analysis, with college students comparing the values they observed in the culturally different children with their own values. Discussion and analysis leads to value clarification, understanding, and, hopefully, acceptance of value divergence. As a result of the case studies and ensuing discussions, the pre- and/or in-service teachers would both examine their own value systems and internalize effective means of utilizing "value sharing" in their future classrooms, and in the process, avoid "value conflict."

Practicum Component. Equipped with a knowledge base and having examined and clarified values, the teacher education student should now be ready to become involved in an in-depth way with students who are culturally different.

(This is not to imply that the student has not already been doing observation, perhaps even gaining some practical experience working with children.) In-depth experience can be gained in a myriad of settings - in public school classrooms, private schools and institutions, tutoring programs, etc. Actual contact with culturally different children gives the student opportunity to practice desirable teacher behaviors via instructional and/or informal arrangements, thus gaining practical experience with the culturally different.

Seminar Component. Related to the practicum experience should be a seminar component where teacher education students can discuss experiences, conduct problem-solving sessions concerning problems they confront in their practicum settings, share ideas for teaching culturally different children, and have access to the expertise of the college instructor. The seminar setting promotes learning about various ways to approach similar problems, promotes a feeling of togetherness among the students, provides a link between the practical, on-the-field experience and the college learning experience, and it offers a valuable opportunity for the neophyte to practice and improve his teaching behaviors before actually entering the field as a professional.

Indeed, this proposed approach - KNOWLEDGE/VALUES/PRACTICUM/SEMINAR - can be an effective design for developing creative activities for educating pre- and in-service teachers to work with culturally different children. Providing a blend of the theoretical and the practical, this procedure is based on a philosophy of teaching and learning by doing, with the college instructor modeling desirable teaching strategies for the teacher education student.

Footnotes:

[1] Alexander Moore, Realities of the Urban Classroom, (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1962).

[2] Kenneth Clark, Dark Ghetto: Dilemmas of Social Power,(New York: Harper and Rpw Publishers, 1965).

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BACKGROUND OF PRESENTERS

Dr. Dormalee Lindberg, Assistant Professor of Elementary Education, Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, received her bachelor's and master's degrees from Northeast Missouri State University, Kirksville, and her doctorate from the University of Missouri -- Columbia.

Dr. Kevin J. Swick, Assistant Professor of Elementary Education, Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, received his bachelor's and master's degrees from Bowling Green University in Ohio, and his doctorate from the University of Connecticut.

Drs. Lindberg and Swick have worked with children of preschool age, elementary, secondary, and university students, and have recently conducted several in-service workshops for elementary teachers and administrators. They have team-taught together at the university level, and are presently collaborating in the areas of research, writing, and materials production. Articles recently accepted for publication include:

To appear in an upcoming issue of Improving College and University Teaching:
"A Team Teaching Experience: Reflections and Conversation."

To appear in College Student Journal:
"Teaching the Culturally Different College Student."
"Cultural Diversity as Curriculum Base."
"Components of an Effective Curricular Design for Teaching Culturally Different College Students."
"Components of an Effective Classroom Design for Teaching the Culturally Different College Student."

To appear in Learning:
"A Mathematics Puzzle for Elementary School Teachers."

During the upcoming ASCD Twenty-Eighth Annual Conference in Minneapolis, Minnesota, March 17-21, Drs. Lindberg and Swick will co-chair a four-day Action Laboratory, "Improving the Attitudes of Children Toward the Culturally Different."

The presenters' work focuses on working with students as individuals in an open, supportive atmosphere where both teacher and taught may learn and grow joyfully. Their work with children includes Head Start, a disadvantaged Kindergarten group, camping, and both rural and urban socio-economically deprived. Both their work with young children and with university students has taken place in an informal, open classroom atmosphere with experience-based, activity-oriented curriculum.